Around and Around "Industrial Revolution"

By FRANK PARKER STOCKBRIDGE

NO other single theme, except perhaps that of life and death, is currently engaging the thoughts and the pens of so many earnest seekers as that impending (or not, as one prefers) social change that is broadly termed the Industrial Revolution.

They are all at it, from the Gawdsakers, who want to know why we don't do something about it, to the Bolsheviki, who know just what they want to do about it, if not why. Every one seems agreed on the main theme, that the relations of Labor and Capital (to use rather inaccurate but familiar terms) are going to be somehow different from what they were before the war. At this point the commentators quite unanimously part company. Some would put a stop to any such nonsense before it gets any further; some would go the whole distance and turn over all industries and business to the proletariat forthwith.

Between these are the middle-of-the-roadsters; they are the ones who realize that there is a serious problem in process of solution, and who are trying to contribute to make the readjustment as painless and as equitable as possible for all concerned.

II.

It all makes interesting reading and much of it would be important as well were it not for the fashion such situations have in America of straightening themselves out with a minimum of outside assistance. That is one of the handicaps writers confront in making books on timely topics. It takes quite some time to write even a small book; few authors can do it under three or four weeks and many take even longer. And it is always annoying, when one has discovered a revolution in the act of impending and goes home to write a book about it and warn people, to find, when the book is finished, that the revolution has already happened. Of course one could stick around and watch the revolution revolve, but then all there would be to write about would be things that really hapenned. And it is so much more interesting, and easier, to write about the things that are going to happen.

Perhaps this is too flippant a tone to use in introducing the serious and perfectly well meaning gentlemen who are responsible for the latest group of books dealing with the Great Problem. It does seem, however, to an innocent bystander, who has been getting it where the innocent bystander usually does whenever there is a rumpus going on, as though all the revolutions on the schedule had done most of their revolving before either the police or the reporters arrived.

But whether it has already arrived or is still up the track somewhere, the underlying causes of the industrial revolution, the historical background of the conditions that it is now sought to remedy, are quite adequately set forth in Glenn Frank's *The Politics of Industry*. Mr. Frank sees, as the inevitable outcome of the new world recognition of industrial enterprise as the foundation stone of our modern democracy, the shifting of political leadership from the realm of what we now term "politics" to the field of business itself. He looks for a decided reaction from central control of business, industry, agriculture, education and other social functions, a decentralizing of statesmanship and the removal of Government imposed barriers to industrial and social progress.

"It took the excessive war-induced centralization of economic and industrial functions in the hand of the Government to dramatize the essential fallacy of trying to substitute the politician for the engineer and executive," he says. "An ill-trained and amateur bureaucracy" cannot regulate everybody's affairs without disaster. The industrial readjustments of the future must be worked out by the men concerned in the industries, employers and employees together.

"Among forward looking business men the conception is obtaining that the problem of labor and capital is not a question of a test of strength between two opposing forces; that both are 'workers' engaged in a fundamental public service; that the problem of industrial relations will never be solved by benevolence on the part of employers or by usurpation on the part of employees; that the problem will be solved when the best and most scientific way of doing business and conducting industry is found; and that the best way of doing business will be found to be the most just and harmonious way of doing business."

As class distinctions are more sharply drawn in England than in America, the class war between Labor and Capital has been more acute overseas than it is ever likely to be at home. American business men, however, cannot fail to gain valuable suggestions from the experience of Great Britain, where some of the largest and most important industries have taken the workers into partnership, giving them a share in the management of the works and establishing what seems to be a genuine industrial democracy.

III.

Details of the development of the condition which led to this state of things, facts and figures about its actual working out in practice, and, in an appendix occupying a good two-thirds of the book, the full text of the much talked of Whitley report and many other official documents bearing on Britain's solution of the labor problem, are given in Meyer Bloomfield's *Management and Men*.

Not every British industry has established the six hour day; it is not stated that any of them has as yet. That it is coming and bringing with it increased productiveness of the industrial plant, larger profits for all concerned, including the workers, and enlarged opportunities for happy living, is the conviction of Lord Leverhulme, better known to fame as Sir William Lever, soap maker and founder of Port Sunlight, whose addresses on public occasions over a number of years have been edited by Stanley Unwin, gathered into a volume with an introduction by Viscount Haldane and published under the title *The Six Hour Day*.

Liberal and broadminded in his outlook on life and work, the views of this hard-headed British business man with high ideals are good reading, whether he is describing to the members of the Maudsley Congregational Church how Henry Ford succeeded, telling the Royal Society of Arts that the time has come for genuine comradeship between capital and labor, or explaining to the Liverpool Trades and Labor Council that it is no use talking to a workingman about a nice, artistic home with pictures on the walls when he comes home only to sleep for the next day's work.

IV.

Lord Leverhulme and other thinkers who agree that an industrial readjustment is necessary lay stress upon the necessity for greater productiveness of industrial plants. Shorter working hours, they point out, have resulted in increased production because the energies of the workers are not exhausted and they easily do more in eight hours than they formerly did in ten for the same or lower wages. And in increased production these factory owners see the salvation of the industrial system, which can only justify its existence by producing necessary goods in such quantities that the price of the finished articles can be kept down to the lowest possible level.

With that Thorstein Veblen agrees, in the little volume called *The Vested Interests and the State of the Industrial Arts*. This is a collection of articles originally published in the lately deceased *Dial*.

Mr. Veblen has been hailed in the radical press as a great thinker who has been overlooked by the world for twenty years. One gets the impression from his book that he has been thinking for twenty years about conditions as they existed twenty years ago and has not looked about him in that period to note the great changes that have been going on in the social structure which he condemns unsparingly. It is the manufacturer, the "vested interest," that is responsible for underproduction, not the worker, he maintains. Everything is a "vested interest" that enables the owner of property of any kind to obtain compensation for its use. This, Mr. Veblen holds, is "getting something for nothing."

The American Federation of Labor and the Rotary clubs are typical examples of representatives of vested interests; the I. W. W. and the Non-Partisan League are mentioned as groups who are leading the protest against an outworn economic system.

Mr. Veblen offers no "programme"; all he insists on is that whatever is, is wrong. Much more optimistic is Francis Neilson in *The Old Freedom*. Mr. Neilson is not satisfied with things as they are, but he sees a great change under way and has hope for the future. The road to readjustment lies not through Socialism, whether Marian or Fabian, but in a more complete return to that individualism which founded the British Empire and the United States of America. Mr. Neilson is a student of history, a former member of the British Parliament, and has lived a third of his life in America. He is an avowed follower of Henry George, and in this book has built up most interestingly a historical background for the single tax programme, in the adoption of which he sees the hope of society's salvation. Mr. Neilson writes with much more clarity and immeasurably more temperance of expression than most of those who know just how things ought to be and want them set right by next Tuesday. His book is worth reading.

V.

Mr. Neilson's book, like Mr. Veblen's, Mr. Frank's and to a large extent Lord Leverhulme's, deals with what ought to happen, in the author's judgment, more than what has actually happened. Mr. Bloomfield has told us what has happened in England, the moves that have definitely been made toward at least a beginning of the new social relations that we might as well call the industrial revolution as anything else. In *The Shop Committee* William Leavitt Stoddard describes the application in American industries of the most talked of phase of the British programme, the reorganization of businesses so as to give every employee a voice in the management and a chance to express his ideas of the way in which his own work should be done.

Mr. Stoddard, as administrator for the National War Labor Board, had much to do with industrial reorganization in many plants engaged in war work. Since the war ended other industrial establishments have adopted systems similar to those which the exigencies of war compelled some to set up, until now there are twelve concerns of the first rank, including the Bethlehem Steel Company, the General Electric Company and the Willys-Overland automobile works, in which the shop committee system is in operation, as well as some sixty smaller ones, while the author lists thirty or so concerns in which something like an industrial democracy on somewhat different plans is in effect.

Mr. Stoddard calls his book *A Handbook for Employer and Employee*. It is more than that; it is a simple, readable report of a revolution accomplished.

THE POLITICS OF INDUSTRY. By GLENN FRANK. The Century Company.
MANAGEMENT AND MEN. By MEYER BLOOMFIELD. The Century Company.
THE SIX HOUR DAY. By LORD LEVERHULME. Henry Holt & Co.
THE VESTED INTERESTS. By THORSTEIN VEBLEN. B. W. Huebsch.
THE OLD FREEDOM. By FRANCIS NEILSON. B. W. Huebsch.
THE SHOP COMMITTEE. By WILLIAM LEAVITT STODDARD. The Macmillan Company.

Arnold Bennett's "Judith"

By BARRETT H. CLARK.

ARNOLD BENNETT once drew smiles of contempt to the lips of practised playwrights when he claimed that a play was easier to write than a novel, because it was so much shorter. His own dramatic achievements at that time, indeed, were sufficient proof that he spent little more time on four acts of a play than on four chapters of a novel.

But the amusing part of it is that Bennett has managed to write three or four first rate plays—two of them commercial successes of more than ordinary dimensions—during the intervals between long novels, book reviews, war and travel books, and a pocket philosophy or two.

And now comes his best play, *Judith*, now running in London and to all appearances likely to prove a great popular success. It is a consummately skilful rehandling of the old Apocryphal tale of Judith and Holofernes. Sir Arthur Pinero himself could not have constructed a finer scenario, and as for the literary style, I shrink from expressing my views on what that master of technique would have given us. Since Bennett wrote the interesting, but comparatively feeble *Cupid and Commonsense*, he has developed an unerring sense of the dramatic. Not that he has copied tricks from the well-made-play school; on the contrary, he has learned to discard most of the time-worn devices, and gone straight to the soul of his story; he has discovered an amazingly simple method of presenting character and situation and story through the medium of the theatre.

There is not a superfluous word, not an unnecessary gesture in *Judith;* it is beautifully complete, serious as a work of art, satisfying as a picture and dignified as literature.

A very curious discovery will doubtless be made by the reader before he has finished the first act. In this beautiful and occasionally serious legend as handled by Arnold Bennett there lurks a never failing spirit of high good humor, a broadly human sense of the ridiculous. The dramatist does not trifle with his story and characters, but he evidently delights in the situation. He is always conscious that the sacrifice of Judith and her maid, Haggith, is a scene in the great comedy of sex; we feel him smiling at the comedy of Holofernes brought low by the wiles of a pretty woman, and a whole army of Assyrians subjugated by devices as old as the world and as gloriously simple.

The story is to Mr. Bennett a huge joke, a pleasing satire. And he is doubtless right, so far as fundamentals are concerned, whether they be fitted to a situation in Bethulia in 500 B. C., or in Belgium in 1914. The situation is dateless.

And yet—I don't particularly care to have Judith and Holofernes made too human! I am willing, for instance, to allow Bernard Shaw to trifle with Cæsar and Cleopatra, with Napoleon and Gen. Burgoyne; I am ready to be amused if a talented writer like Mr. Philip Moeller takes a Bible story and turns it into a satire; but when Arnold Bennett bases a satirical play upon the beautiful old legend of Judith and makes me feel that Judith and the Assyrian General were human beings like my neighbors I am shocked—esthetically shocked. While I admire his art, I cannot enter into complete sympathy with his point of view.

I must comment on the style of the dialogue. It is wholly successful. It is a very clever adaptation of Biblical language to the rhetorical requirements of speech. It is full of a balanced rhythm that is as satisfying to the ear as good blank verse, though it is never vitiated by stray lines of iambic pentameter.

Judith addresses Holofernes:

"As Nebuchadnezzar is your god, so is the Lord of Israel mine. And my God laid a secret command upon me to speak with Prince Holofernes alone and with no other, in his tent. Thus, and thus only, was it that I refused to speak in the presence even of the mighty Bagoas. But as I withstood you in the valley there, the God of Israel descended upon me and I heard the voice of God in my ear, and the voice said: 'It is permitted to thee to speak with Bagoas also.' Therefore I yielded to the importunity of Prince Holofernes and of Bagoas."

This is living speech. So far as externals are concerned, Arnold Bennett seems as much at home among Biblical personages as among the inhabitants of the Midlands. The only trouble is, he has been a little too anxious to bring Bethulia within the city limits of the Five Towns.

JUDITH. A Play in 3 Acts. By ARNOLD BENNETT. George H. Doran Company.

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